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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 002412

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER, D. TEITELBAUM  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
PARIS FOR C. NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)

SUBJECT: MDC MEMBERSHIP DESPONDENT AT PERCEIVED LACK OF LEADERSHIP

REF: A. HARARE 2313

[B](#). HARARE 2332

[C](#). HARARE 2179

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Various MDC Officials have commented that there is increasing despondency and frustration within the party rank and file. The MDC is planning mass action for early in the New Year, but much homework remains undone, and with an increasingly resigned public, it is unclear whether people will be motivated to follow leaders tomorrow whom they feel have failed them today. End Summary.

Suspended Mayor Wants Party Support  
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[1](#)2. (C) On November 26, Judge Moses Chinhengo issued a decision upholding the suspension of Harare Mayor Elias Mudzuri. On December 2 Minister of Local Government Ignatius Chombo sent reportedly identical letters to six suspended MDC Harare City councilors notifying them that they were fired. Over lunch with the Ambassador on December 3 the Mayor complained that the MDC leadership failed to make a public statements condemning the firings of MDC councilors and the continued suspension of the Mayor. Mudzuri also complained the party had failed to compel councilors to make decisions in council, which had previously been agreed to at caucus--except to request their resignations. While he did not specify, the Mayor was likely referring to decisions such as the one to withdraw the Mayor's salary and other benefits; the failure to object to the reinstatement of Town Clerk Chideya (Ref C); and the failure to object to the suspensions and firings of the six councilors. Mudzuri complained that the rank and file were asking for leadership and the party was not delivering.

Acting Mayor Refuses to Resign  
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[1](#)3. (C) Dennis Murira, Special Assistant to the MDC Party Chairman, said that the commission of inquiry set up to investigate the actions of MDC Harare City Councilors who were not toeing the party line (Ref C) interviewed the wayward councilors and the Acting Mayor and issued a report to the party leadership in late November. The commission recommended that the leadership request that the councilors in question resign, and that the party reprimand them. The MDC followed through and in late November requested that Acting Mayor Sekesai Makwavarara and six councilors resign by December 1. All complied except Makwavarara. Although news reports suggested that the MDC might expel Makwavarara from the party, Murira said that would be futile, that Makwavarara would join the ruling party immediately. Instead the MDC would likely let her serve out her term before expelling her.

Minister Bent on Ruining Mayor  
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[1](#)4. (C) Over lunch with the Ambassador and DCM on December 11, MDC Secretary General Welshman Ncube and Spokesman Paul Themba Nyathi said that MDC Councilor Christopher Mushonga is from the Zezuru clan of the Shona, as is Minister of Local Government Ignatius Chombo. Although the two are from different political parties, the MDC officials said this common ethnic background has provided a basis for Mushonga and Chombo to at least communicate. Mushonga, until the recent MDC disciplinary action, led a group of MDC councilors who complied with directions from the Minister (Ref C). The MDC officials said that in contrast Mudzuri is from the Karanga subgroup and Chombo is committed to ruining him. Chombo would be satisfied to leave the rest of the City Council alone--he is after Mudzuri with the investigating commission and he intends to finish him off politically.

[1](#)5. (C) Nyathi and Ncube said that the Acting Mayor has sold out and even refuses to take phone calls from the MDC leadership. It was an inexperienced council, and Chombo has played his hand perfectly by identifying councilors who are soft and influencing them. The MDC officials agreed that

requesting the council to resign en masse would likely result in solid MDC councilors resigning, and weak ones prone to yielding to ZANU-PF blandishments retaining their posts - a worst case scenario for the party.

#### Party in Disarray in Kadoma

16. (C) Losing MDC candidate for the Kadoma Central parliamentary by-election, Charles Mupandawana reiterated his complaint (Ref B) to poloff on December 3 that a lack of support from the party was a critical factor in his loss. Mupandawana said that his campaign team budgeted a need for Z\$8 million (US\$1,350) per week for the last three weeks of his campaign, but instead received Z\$8 million total. He also said they had requested five vehicles, but had only received four, of which two were in reliable working order. By comparison, Mupandawana said that the MDC sent 20 vehicles for use during the October 2002 by-election in Insiza. Mupandawana said that no one from the MDC Information or Legal Departments came to assist him in with publicity and legal representation for detainees respectively. While MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai did visit once and address a gathering, Mupandawana said that paled in comparison to ZANU-PF Ministers Elliott Manyika and Ignatius Chombo, as well as MP Philip Chiyangwa's regular visits to Kadoma in support of the ZANU-PF candidate.

17. (C) Nyathi and Ncube said that party structures in Kadoma have been in disarray for some time. They described a conflict between factions which went unresolved through the recent by-election. According to the MDC officials this conflict was the major reason the MDC lost the election. In contrast to Mupandawana's statements, the MDC officials said the MDC had indeed sent Z\$8 million per week during the last three weeks of the campaign.

#### Even Parliamentarians Get the Blues

18. (C) Miles Toder, Director of the State University of New York's Institutional Strengthening of Parliament Programs here said recently that over the past couple months he has sensed despondency and frustration among MDC parliamentarians who feel that participating in Parliament has effected no political change. Many MDC parliamentarians have in recent months spent increasing time with their law firms, import businesses, and retail stores primarily because they need the money and they feel they are achieving nothing in Parliament. Toder said MPs are facing stiff competition for the nominations for their own seats and are subsequently concerned about bolstering their campaign coffers. Toder said he expects significant turnover among MPs at the next parliamentary elections as each party attempts to spread the patronage of being a parliamentarian to other party members.

#### GOZ Gearing up for Early Parliamentary Elections?

19. (C) Toder also said there was evidence that the GOZ may be gearing up for early parliamentary elections. The GOZ is currently aggressively pursuing an amendment to the Citizenship Act that would enfranchise longtime residents of Zimbabwe from neighboring countries with the right to vote. He suspects this effort is directed at ex-commercial farmworkers, many of whom are originally from neighboring countries. Mike Murray of Justice for Agriculture, also views ex-farmworkers as a persuadable swing vote. Mupandawana said that he suspected food was used to buy votes in resettled areas in Kadoma. Wishing he'd had some to dole out, Mupandawana said in this environment a little food can easily buy votes even among people like ex-farmworkers who have lost their livelihoods due to ZANU-PF policies. Toder said ZANU-PF had resurrected reform of the Electoral Act to address SADC norms, but also to resolve technical problems that would help the ruling party maintain control of the electoral process. He said moves were underway to open the registration rolls to new party members, and also to re-draw constituency lines especially in urban areas by joining them with nearby resettled areas to dilute the MDC's urban strength. Toder said the reputation of government was to leave things until the last moment and these early preparations could indicate planning to dissolve parliament and call early elections, which the President could legally do.

#### MDC to Gain Religion

10. (C) Murira, who is also a leading member of a core group of MDC officials charged with planning mass action, said on December 11, that he sensed despondency among the MDC rank and file. He said this was in response to the MDC leadership pursuing talks that the rank and file feared would lead to ZANU-PF swallowing the MDC. MDC members also perceived the MDC leadership to be doing nothing to resolve the crises

11. (C) Murira said that in response to calls that the leadership do something, the main strategy for mass action early in the New Year (Ref A) was for MDC activists to hold prayer vigils in high-density areas around Harare. Basically the theory being that the GOZ might be able to suppress an opposition party, but it would be more difficult for it and security personnel on the ground to suppress people under the auspices of the church. Murira said the MDC was talking to the Bishops troika and other prominent clergy to get them to declare the talks initiative dead, and to get their blessing for MDC activists to hold prayer vigils as members of their churches. Murira said that after several nights of vigils, the MDC (via church leaders) would then hold a large vigil at a venue in the center of Harare as a pretext to calling a major march immediately thereafter.

Comment:

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12. (C) With a tacit strategy of lying low, focusing on building grassroots party support, and waiting for public opinion to fully realize that the GOZ has scuttled talks, the MDC has been largely invisible in the past few months. In the absence of the Daily News the party has also missed various opportunities to issue government-critical press statements, for firing MDC councilors, for government-sponsored intimidation during the Kadoma by-election and for continued GOZ mismanagement of the economy. With its lowered profile, the party seems to have created the perception that it is doing nothing to resolve the political and economic crises. While the idea of organizing events under the rubric of the church is novel, with the government controlling the daily media the GOZ could easily crack down on the prayer vigils and claim that the MDC abused the church to hold political gatherings. Even if the MDC fully developed this strategy, and got church officials on board, it remains unclear whether an increasingly resigned public would heed the call to gather in protest. Plagued by a lack of resources and facing the many obstacles placed in its way, the MDC has been hard pressed to mount effective opposition to an increasingly repressive regime. As it prepares itself for the crucial 2005 parliamentary elections, the MDC will need to focus its energies and training on allocating scant resources, executing planning, generating internal consensus, and motivating both its membership and the Zimbabwean electorate at large to remain in the game.

SULLIVAN